

POIROT. That the fingerprints on the dagger belong to Major Ackroyd himself. The murderer closed the dead victim's hand around the handle.

INSPECTOR RAGLAN. I'll look into it. But don't be surprised if nothing comes of it.

(He exits.)

SHEPPARD. At least Inspector Raglan is on the case.

POIROT. I am afraid that man could not find his way down the stairs with a map.

SHEPPARD. But, what if it is Ralph? The will most benefits him. And Major Blunt seems convinced of Ralph's guilt.

POIROT. Yes, I heard from Major Blunt this morning, to a letter under my door while I drank tea with your lovely sister. He was most forthcoming.

(MAJOR BLUNT appears, elsewhere. He is overly cheerful, and more than a little anxious.)

MAJOR BLUNT. Dear Mr. Poirot, I'm writing with a confession. On your hunt yesterday, you accused us of hiding something. I plead guilty. Mrs. Ackroyd was correct. I have been badly in debt of late and I hope Roger might consider backing a business venture. But he declined. Of course, as one of his closest friends, I provided for in Roger's will which offers a solution to my problem. But, I wanted to be forthright so as to clear myself of suspicion. Perhaps, you might ask Inspector Raglan not to mention this at the inquest. You recall I have a secure alibi as I was in the billiard room at the time of the crime. As I say, I wish to conceal nothing from you. Sincerely, Major Hector Blunt.

(MAJOR BLUNT exits.)

SHEPPARD. But that hardly clears him! He admits his motive!

POIROT. He plays his hand wisely. They all do. I'm beginning to understand.

SHEPPARD. And yet, I have no idea what to make of any of it.

POIROT. Come now! You've seen what I've seen. Should our ideas not be the same?

SHEPPARD. You're laughing at me.

POIROT. Not at all. You are like the little child who wants to know the way the engine works.

SHEPPARD. Ha! Well, I have always fancied myself a bit of an amateur tinkerer. I like to take things apart and put them back again. But, in this case, I don't understand any of the pieces of this particular machine.

POIROT. Right then. It's time to use what we already know. Can you meet me at Fernly?

SHEPPARD. Certainly. I can be there after lunch. I don't know where you are at present. How long will it take you to get there?

POIROT. But, my dear Doctor, I am already there.

(POIROT hangs up and exits through the French doors. SHEPPARD addresses the audience as he steps into Fernly.)

SHEPPARD. The door at Fernly had been left unlocked, as if I were expected. Fernly Hall had always cast a large shadow over King's Abbot. A glimpse into a luxurious way of life most of us could only dream of. Fernly was, in a way, a reflection of Roger Ackroyd's larger than life persona.

Without him, it no longer seemed to me like Fernly Hall at all, anymore.

(GERTRUDE enters.)